

28. Be strong in the Lord

April 28, 2013

I can comfortably say that not many people in this room actually had ever faced a battle situation in their lives. Some would say, "I watched the movie 'Saving Private Ryan'." Not even close.

But if you are a born-again Christian, whether you'd like to believe it or not, you are right smack dab in the middle of battlefield, that is a spiritual battlefield.

I am sure the greatest day in your life was the day you put your faith in Jesus Christ. And as we grow in our faith and knowledge of what God actually did for us, we become more aware of how significant that day really was. That was the day when we literally had our eternal address changed from a place called 'hell' to a place called 'heaven.' That was the day when we turned from darkness to light and from the bondage of Satan to the liberty in God. That was the day when, according to Jesus, there was a celebration in heaven given in our honor – a victory shout, if you will, from the angels and from those who have gone before us.

But it was also the day when a very real spiritual battle began in your life. In fact, it has been said that conversion to Christ has made our hearts a battlefield. Just as surely as there is a God who loves you, there is also a devil who hates you – a devil who wants to stop the work God is doing in your life.

We are finally back into the expository study of the Book of Ephesians after we've been studying the spiritual background for the last five weeks. Let's learn from the Lord how to prepare for our spiritual battles.

A. BE STRONG IN THE LORD

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Why do we need the power of God's might? Because without the Lord's protection, we are nothing more than a bunch of sitting ducks in front of Satan's fury.

While it is true that the devil stands next to us and accuses us before God, it is also true that Jesus stands at the right hand of God, interceding for us. It is because of Jesus' commitment to us that we are able to succeed on the spiritual battlefield.

We are not survivors because of our great valor, our wisdom or our immense Bible knowledge, but because Jesus prays for us. While Satan constantly accuses us, Jesus intercedes for us day and night.

While it is true that Satan is a roaring lion seeking to devour us, he can only roar and snarl and bear his fangs to scare us. But he can't really get hold of us and take us away from the Lord. However, if we yield to Satan, that's quite another matter. God is our Protector and our Shield.

What does apostle Paul mean when he said, "in the power of His might"? In English, these two words, "power" and "might" can be interchanged without any problem. But in Greek, they are clearly two different nouns. First, "kratos" is the Greek word for 'power' with an action. Second, "ischys" is the Greek word for 'might'. This would have been better if it was translated as 'ability' than 'might'.

A muscular man's big muscles have "ischys" the ability to lift up a heavy weight even if he doesn't use them. It is the reserve of strength. But when he pumps weights, he is exercising his "kratos" the power in operation.

Our God has vast reservoirs of might that can be realized as power in our Christian life. We can see God's might in our lives in three ways:

- His might does not work in me as I sit and do nothing .
- Or I can try to work without depending on His might. This, too, does not work.
- Or His might works in me as I depend on Him by faith, and step out to do His work.

Now, that is the right way to do.

B. PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Some Bible teachers teach their congregation about the Whole Armor of God in a rather different way than God intended. They take this as some sort of spell. They say, "You need to claim the Whole Armor of God every morning , and rebuke the demonic forces. Then everything will go smooth." NO T!!!

When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, he was chained to a Roman guard. So when we come to his description of the armor of God beginning in chapter 6, it's worth noting that Paul had a lot of time to observe Roman armor . There it was, 24 hours a day: belt, breastplate, footwear, helmet, shield, and sword. This description was not given in a haphazard manner off the top of Paul's head to pass the time. Rather, this illustration is inspired by God. There is significance behind every word Paul attached to each piece of armor.

Paul identifies six pieces of armor altogether. The first three – the belt, breastplate, and footwear, were for long-range protection and were never removed on the battlefield. The second three, the shield, the helmet, and the sword, were kept in readiness for use when actual fighting began.

After all, you could wear your helmet, breastplate, and shield, but without a sword, you would find yourself in the unfortunate position of only defending or holding ground. Or, you might be wearing your footwear, your belt, and have your sword in hand, enabling you to attack enemy strongholds, but you would quickly lose what you gain due to an inadequate defense.

So, we need the whole armor of God. It is not for us to pick and choose; it is a package deal. God has given us clear and defined spiritual weapons to fight with. Understanding what they are and how to use them can make all the difference in our spiritual battles.

By the way, you cannot wear someone else's armor as yours. It has to be fitted for your spiritual body.

We find a good example in 1 Samuel 17. The Philistine army invaded the land of Israel again. This time, to avoid an all-out battle, the Philistines had chosen a one-on-one contest of champions to decide the victor. I am sure that the earth seems to shake as their champion, a mean fighting machine Goliath, strode to within shouting distance and pulled up to his full nine feet, nine inches height. Squaring his huge

shoulders, Goliath bellowed up to the Israelites who were peeking over the ridge. He shouted, "Fee, fi, fo fum, I smell the blood of an English man."

At that time the Israel army pretty much consisted of farmers, shepherds, and peasants. They were not trained professional soldiers and it is no wonder that they were scared to death of this giant.

But the Lord brought His own spiritual giant, a Jewish teenager shepherd boy David. He declared that he would take out this Philistine giant Goliath as he fought against the lions and bears that attacked his sheep. Soon David found himself in the tent of the Israel king Saul.

Speaking of king Saul, if there was anyone who should have gone out to fight against Goliath, it should have been Saul since he was head and shoulder taller than anyone in Israel. Instead he was cowering in his tent and hoping that someone else would do his job. Then, this brave shepherd boy showed up. So the coward king gladly offered David his armor.

1 Samuel 17:38-39 So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. 39 David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them." So David took them off.

It must have been a sight. David, a 36 regular, wearing the armor of Saul, a 52 extra long.

Often, people try to fight with another person's armor. They see God do something wonderful through someone else, and they try to copy it without really making it their own. This is not how God's work is done.

David did not face Goliath unarmed. He had much better armor than king Saul's. Saul had a bronze helmet, but David had the helmet of salvation. Saul had a coat of mail, but David had a breastplate of righteousness. Saul had a sword, but David had the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. David had the whole armor of God!

You know the rest of the story. In the Valley of Elah, between two armies, the Philistines and Israelis, Goliath and David advanced to each other. Fearlessly, David ran to within range, loaded his sling, and "Wham!" A perfect strike! David's fast ball hit Goliath right between the two headlights. You could hear David saying, "Timber!"

I guess we can say, "Goliath was really stoned and out cold." It is not in the Bible, it Goliath's nickname was "Golly." So he was dead, his friends said, "Bye Golly."

When everyone else in Israel thought, "Goliath is so big, I can't beat him," David thought, "Goliath is so big, I can't miss him."

C. NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The important point is that our battle is not against human beings. It is against spiritual powers. We are wasting our time fighting people when we ought to be fighting the devil who seeks to control people and make them oppose the work of God.

During Paul's ministry in Ephesus, a riot took place that could have destroyed the church in Acts 19. It wasn't caused only by silversmith Demetrius and his associates, because behind them were Satan and his demonic associates. Certainly Paul and the church prayed, and the opposition was silenced.

President Obama and his liberal administration, the lamestream media, and the Hollywood liberals do not hide their hatred against Christianity. More than letter writing and picketing in front of their buildings and events, we need to start to fight the battles from our knees.

The Christian cannot afford to be ignorant of Satan's schemes. Today we are living in "ABC culture" which stands for "Anything But Christianity". The people against our Lord are cunning and crafty and lie in wait to deceive the naive people, but behind them is the main deceiver, Satan. He masquerades as an angel of light and seeks to blind men's minds from the truth of God's Word.

The fact that Paul uses the word "wrestle" in this verse indicates that we are involved in a hand-to-hand battle and are not mere spectators at a game. Satan wants to use our external enemy, the world, and our internal enemy, the flesh, to defeat us. His weapons and battle plans are formidable, yet our God will win.

Apostle Paul also said that our spiritual weapons are so powerful because of God's power and truth, they can destroy strongholds of evil in 2 Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 10:4-6 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

How are we going to do that? The answer is in the second half of v5 which we just read:

2 Corinthians 10:5b bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ

Don't let your thoughts go into lala land or evil realm by the guidance of our own sinful nature, rather let your every thought be obedient to Christ. Guess what, if we do that, we will never have to worry that we might sin against Him.

D. PRINCIPLES

1) No satanic assault is stronger than God.

Satanic forces are strong without a doubt. But we don't need to fear, because our Lord is ultimately stronger, and we will prevail if we trust in Him and rely on His strength.

2) No satanic schemes can penetrate God's armor.

If we put it on and keep it on, Satan cannot harm us spiritually.

3) No satanic force can defeat God's work.

God is sovereign and His plan is already established long before Satan was ever created.

4) No satanic plan can prevail over the prayers of God's people.

Our prayer is a hot line to the Lord. We not only let our Lord know, even though He already knows everything, and we receive the comfort and peace through His presence in our communication with Him.